



Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. My name is Michelle Brown and I am a Certified Nurses Aide at St. Mary's Home in West Hartford. I come before you today to share my perspective and to ask you to please use your power as legislators to address the critical issues that exist in nursing homes across the state.

I have worked for 33 years as a CNA at St. Mary's Home, and for the last 13 years have worked on their rehab unit. I love the residents I care for and it truly gives me joy to care for them and to help them recover. As a CNA I am responsible for many tasks including bathing, changing, and feeding residents. On my unit we have residents who need extensive care, some who lack the ability to even brush their own teeth.

It has been a pleasure to care for my residents, but as the staffing crisis has worsened over the years it has become harder and harder to provide the level of care they deserve. I often care for 14 or 15 residents all on my own. To put this in perspective, I must bath, change, and feed 14 individuals all on my own. What happens if an incontinent resident has an accident and I can't attend to them right away? They must lay in their own poop or pee until I can get to them. More and more I am finding I cannot keep up with all my tasks at work, despite not taking any breaks and running myself ragged my entire shift. Simply put, there is no way a CNA can care for 14 or 15 residents and provide the level of care those residents deserve. A CNA should never have more than 8 residents they are caring for.

Another challenge we face is the ever expanding nature of our work. Nursing homes are no longer places where only the elderly receive end of life care. Now we are caring for individuals with psychiatric conditions and substance addiction. Daily I am beat up by residents as I tend to them. I do not blame the residents; I know this is a symptom of their condition. However, the fact remains that my coworkers are constantly being asked to do more with less.

To address these challenges, we need more staff. We cannot be expected to provide quality care with the staffing levels we have. I understand nursing homes are struggling to find people who want to do this work, but that is because the wages are so poor. Why would you subject yourself to the working conditions in a nursing home for \$16 an hour when you can do an easier job and earn \$20 an hour?

Sadly, it would appear that nursing home operators, like Trinity, would rather take advantage of the good nature of my coworkers and I than pay us a living wage. Personally, I have had enough and will be leaving St. Mary's Home in the coming year. At my age I cannot continue to subject myself to these working conditions and earn such minimal pay. This is my

life's work and it breaks my heart that I can no longer do it, but I am not alone in feeling this way. If aggressive steps are not taken by the legislature and the state to address understaffing in homes like mine, there will be no one left willing to do this work.

Please, do what is right by both nursing home workers and the residents they care for, and take action to address the critical understaffing in nursing homes.

Thank you for your time.